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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002582

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DEPT. FOR EUR/SE AND NEA/I

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SUBJECT: KRG OFFICIALS IN ANKARA SEEK DIALOGUE

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROSS WILSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (S) SUMMARY: Ambassador met October 17 with the Chief of Staff to KRG PM Nechirvan Barzani, Sawraz Hawrami, and advisor Zakaria Hazan to discuss the PKK and Turkey/KRG dialogue. Ambassador told Hawrami that the Turkish government does not want military action against the PKK in northern Iraq, but if another serious PKK strike takes place here soon, a CBO may go ahead and no outside influence will stop it. He noted the Turks' interest in dialogue with the KRG, but distrust is high. They would like tangible support from the KRG and President Barzani in opposing the PKK. This might include curbing PKK freedom of movement, curbing material and logistics support the PKK obtains, and embracing the Turkey-Iraq CT agreement, whose denunciation by the KRG had greatly irritated Ankara. Hawrami met separately with AKP MP Mehmet Cicek, cousin to Deputy PM and Counterterrorism Board chairman Cemil Cicek, who apparently gave a tough message on the need for action against the PKK or Turkey would intervene. Hawrami was to return to Irbil October 18, said he would report his findings to the Barzanis, and expected to return for further talks in Ankara early in the week of October 21. He agreed to meet with the Ambassador again at that time. End Summary.

12. (S) Hawrami said that Cicek had emphasized the GOT's intent to utilize a military option against PKK terrorists based in northern Iraq if there is no progress in constraining PKK activities there by Iraq or the KRG. Hawrami appealed for dialogue and pointed as evidence of good intentions to recent statements by KRG leaders urging the PKK to cease attacks on neighboring countries or leave the country. Hawrami said he argued that Kurdish Peshmerga suffered some 3400 dead while fighting with Turkey against the PKK in the 1990s. The organization is no friend of Iraqi Kurds. However, the KRG does not believe it can be addressed through military means, as failures in the 1990s attest. Hawrami reportedly told Cicek that KRG officials believe the PKK can be gutted if Turkey declares a general amnesty for its rank and file (for the KRG, PKK leaders would be excluded). Cicek evidently labeled general amnesty a red line for Turkey, and Hawrami observed that cross border

military action into northern Iraq is a red line for the KRG.

13. (S) Ambassador told Hawrami that given his position in Turkey, he could not advise Iraqi officials on behalf of the US, but that he could make some observations regarding Turkey's perceptions, intentions and expectations. He expressed the view that Turkey does not want to carry out a military operation into northern Iraq. Its government realizes military actions have failed to defeat the PKK in the past. It understands the risks for Turkey domestically and for the kind of Iraq that is in Turkey's interests. It realizes that recent PKK attacks aim to provoke a violent Turkish response that will derail Turkish-Iraq and Turkish-US cooperation, including efforts to go after the PKK. Indeed, the PKK is setting a trap for both Turkey and the KRG. If the PKK succeeds in another spectacular attack in the southeast or in a major city, the government here will find it has no alternative but to act. In Ambassador's opinion, the US or other outsiders will be unable to prevent this.

14. (S) Turkish officials here highlight the same interest in dialogue that Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds do, Ambassador continued. They had flagged upcoming opportunities to talk, including a Neighbors of Iraq interior ministers meeting next week in Kuwait, the recent visit of Vice President Hashimi, an upcoming delegation sent here by PM Maliki, and the Istanbul Expanded Neighbors ministerial in early November. Hawrami's meeting with Cicek fit that pattern, and second tier officials say they meet regularly with KDP envoy Safeen Dizayee. Despite being under attack from the public for failing to protect Turkish citizens, the government moved ahead with a CBO bill only eight days after the October 7 attack on Turkish soldiers, hardly the action of a government

ANKARA 00002582 002 OF 002

rushing to war. The government also believes that the CBO bill is a powerful signal to the Iraqi Kurds, Iraq as a whole and the US that Turkey has run out of patience. It wants actions and believes there are steps the KRG could take.

15. (S) Looking ahead, Ambassador noted that between the red lines of an amnesty and military action, there is wide scope to find common ground. He said that the US has not pressed Turkey on an amnesty and that it seems more likely to be a fruitful topic of discussion in a process that is well underway and not at the outset, where its mention kills the conversation for Turkey. Turkish officials understand the KRG does not want to go to war with the PKK, but they want to see steps that suggest the KRG is on its side against terrorists. Actions of immediate interest to the Turks might include cutting off the PKK's logistical support and its ability to freely move in areas of northern Iraq controlled by Peshmerga. Turkish leaders were very disappointed that the KRG disavowed the September CT agreement signed by Baghdad and Ankara that we also think is a good basis for cooperation. If there could be progress in these areas and as long as there is a reduction in the violence, it is not difficult to imagine that KRG actions could help engineer collaboration along the border that would give practical assurances that terrorists are not transiting the border. In this climate, the Turkish government might see that it has the political space required to consider some kind of amnesty, building off that offered to the PKK only 5-6 years ago.

16. (S) Ambassador urged Hawrami to seek meetings with MFA Iraq Coordinator Celikkol and Presidency/PM foreign affairs advisor Davutoglu when he returns to Ankara. He said he would let them know of his meeting with Hawrami and urge that they talk with him, as well. Hawrami promised to be back in touch, noting that from the KRG perspective, doors remain open to collaboration with Turkey. Ambassador noted that Davutoglu recently used a similar formulation when he said that months ago Turkey and the Iraq/the KRG had several options for handling the PKK, but now there are fewer. Davutoglu was emphatic that Ankara is concerned that all but

the military option will disappear ) and does not want this to happen.

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WILSON